

## Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 178488

EXDIS FOR AMB LEONARD FROM UNA

FOLLOWING REPEAT ROME 12905 ACTION SECSTATE INFO BEIRUT AND  
DAMASCUS DATED JULY 13, 1978.

QUOTE: S E C R E T ROME 12905

EXDIS

FROM VATICAN OFFICE

E.O. 11653: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINT,MOPS,LE,VT

SUBJ: VATICAN REACTIONS TO NEXT STEPS TO DIFFUSE CRISIS  
IN LEBANON

REF: A. STATE 174090 B. ROME 12566

1. ON JULY 12TH WE SHARED IDEAS OUTLINED IN STATE 174090  
WITH VATICAN FOREIGN MINISTER ARCHBISHOP CASAROLI. CASAROLI  
APPLAUDED THE INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS WHICH THE US HAS ALREADY  
TAKEN VIS-A-VIS THE LEBANESE SITUATION AND ENDORSED IN PRINCIPLE

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ALL THE ELEMENTS OUTLINED AS EMINENTLY DESIRABLE FOR STRATEGY  
TO DIFFUSE LEBANESE CRISIS.

2. CASAROLI TOLD US THAT HE WANTED FIRST TO LET US KNOW THAT  
THE VATICAN HAD TAKEN PARALLEL STEPS TO OURS TO FORESTALL  
PRESIDENT SARKIS' RESIGNATION -- THROUGH THE ACTIVITIES OF THE  
NUNCIO IN BEIRUT AND ALSO THROUGH A MESSAGE OF GENERAL

ENCOURAGEMENT TO SARKIS FROM THE POPE -- AND HAS CONTINUED URGING RESTRAINT ON CHRISTIANS IN LEBANON. HE ALSO TOLD US, IN STRICT CONFIDENCE, THAT SINCE WE LAST TALKED (ROME 12306) THE POPE HAS SENT A MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT ASAD OF SYRIA THROUGH THE NUNCIO IN DAMASCUS IN WHICH THE POPE URGED RESPECT FOR CEASE-FIRE AND RESTATED VATICAN COMMITMENT TO UNITY OF LEBANON. SO FAR CASAROLI SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO REPLY FROM ASAD BUT THAT VATICAN HAD AN INDIRECT REPLY IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT OF SYRIA REMONSTRATED THAT ITS ACTIONS IN BEIRUT WERE IN ACCORD WITH ITS MANDATE TO MAINTAIN PEACE AND FOR PRESERVING LEBANESE UNITY AND EXPRESSED RESENTMENT AT OUTSIDE CRITICISM OF ITS ACTIONS. WITH REGARD TO SENDING PAPAL EMISSARY TO LEBANON CASAROLI STATED THAT IDEA HAD NOT BEEN ABANDONED BUT THAT VATICAN THINKING ON THIS SUBJECT HAS SHIFTED FOCUS. INITIAL THINKING WAS IN TERMS OF AN EMISSARY TO MEDIATE AMONG THE VARIOUS CHRISTIAN FACTIONS. NOW THINKING IS THAT IF AN EMISSARY IS SENT TO LEBANON HE SHOULD ALSO GO TO SYRIA AND THAT THE OBJECTIVE SHOULD BE TO ENCOURAGE STEPS TO DIFFUSE THE CRISIS ENGENDERED BY THE RECENT FIGHTING IN BEIRUT. (COMMENT: CASAROLI LEFT US WITH IMPRESSION THAT NATURE OF ASAD REPLY WOULD DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT THE VATICAN DECIDES TO SEND AN EMISSARY.)

3. WITH RESPECT TO "NEXT STEPS TO DIFFUSE THE CRISIS" OUTLINED IN STATE 174090 CASAROLI SAID THAT IN THEIR TOTALITY THEY MADE EMINENTLY GOOD SENSE. HE AGREED THAT A WELL THOUGHT SECRET

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OUT STRATEGY MUST INCORPORATE STEPS TO PROMOTE THE DISENGAGEMENT OF THE FORCES ON THE GROUND, THE LOWERING OF THE VISIBILITY OF THE MILITIAS AND A GENERAL WITHDRAWAL OF THE MILITIAS AND THE ADF FROM POSSIBLE FLASHPOINTS. ON THE POSSIBLE REPLACEMENTS OF THE MILITIAS BY LEBANESE POLICE AND ARMY UNITS CASAROLI COMMENTED, "YES, TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, KEEPING IN MIND THE GENERAL CONTEXT OF CONFIDENCE AND THE NUMBERS NECESSARY TO ACCOMPLISH THE PURPOSE WHILE AT THE SAME TIME MAINTAINING THE SECURITY OF THE CIVILIAN POPULATION." HE THOUGHT THAT THE FIRST STEP IN THIS STRATEGY SHOULD BE THE PLACEMENT OF THE ADF UNDER THE "REA" PERSONAL COMMAND OF PRESIDENT SARKIS, TO BE FOLLOWED BY A CAREFULLY-MONITORED DISARMAMENT OF ALL THE FACTIONS, PROCEEDING ON PARALLEL TRACKS AND IN A BALANCED WAY. GARDNER UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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